

E 286
.B74
1854
Copy 1



REV. MR. STONE'S ORATION,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

MUNICIPAL AUTHORITIES

OF THE

CITY OF BOSTON,

JULY 4, 1854.





AN
O R A T I O N
DELIVERED BEFORE THE
MUNICIPAL AUTHORITIES
OF THE
CITY OF BOSTON,
AT THE
CELEBRATION
OF THE
Seventy-Eighth Anniversary of American Independence,
JULY 4, 1854.

BY REV. A. L. STONE.

SECOND EDITION.

BOSTON:
S. K. WHIPPLE & CO., 100 WASHINGTON STREET.
1854.

E 286
B 74
1854

THE STRUGGLES OF AMERICAN HISTORY.

It is natural for a traveler, pressing forward from sun to sun over hill and valley, to pause on the heights he climbs, that he may look behind him over the length of way already traversed, and before him along the fresh reaches yet to be measured. It is good for the wayfarer of life to rest his steps on the eminences that mark the bounds of his finished years—to take both retrospect and forecast—to give anew his mind to thought, his heart to praise, and his hands to duty. It is equally natural and good for a nation in its swift career to power and greatness, or to whatsoever destiny, to linger awhile on the summits of its successive epochs of life—to learn wisdom from the past—to gather hope for the future, and to gird itself afresh for its race.

These National Birth-days, as their joyous chimes from bell-tower and cannon-throat strike on our ears, are fit occasions—goodly hill-tops—on which to bring within one horizon the memorials of the times gone by, and the presages of those to come. Each gratulant sound on this commemorative morning has its *echo* from “SEVENTY-SIX”—its *reverberations* lose themselves amid the dim defiles of ages yet to be. So does this day come to us both as a historian and a prophet.

We shall not now linger long with this past. Its story is too familiar—the day itself utters it on all our hills and in every valley; childhood knows it as its own household

words. The present is too stirring and eventful—the auguries of the future too momentous. Enough of it we must call back to honor the dues of a just commemoration; and then yield us to the mighty currents that are bearing us and our country's fortunes on their rushing tideway to—*unknown shores*.

And our theme possesses this two-fold advantage, guiding us up the stream in its hitherto flowing, and out along its distant reaches, as we sketch with hurried hand **THE STRUGGLES OF AMERICAN HISTORY**.

The life of nations, as the life of individual man, has its epochs and eras. It does not leap at once to its prime of armed power. It has rather, like humanity itself, its embryo—its birth—its infancy—its childhood, period succeeding to period till it stands stalwart and strong in robust manhood. And all past human history gives melancholy completeness to the parallel, in the decay of national life as it falls into the imbecilities and decrepitudes of age—then sinks into the common tomb of buried empires.

Indeed, it is a universal law, that whatsoever life has a beginning, must win its full development by conflict and struggle. And the annals of every people offer themselves in evidence and illustration of this law of growth.

The Hebrew nation had its germ in the heart of a shepherd dwelling in his tent on the Syrian plains. We watch the germ in its first transplanting, by the hand of Jacob, as he flies from the grave of his father, a fugitive from the vengeance of his elder brother. A little later, twelve men enshrine its imperiled fortunes, when the fierce seven years' famine seems its final doom. In short-lived prosperity it thrives again under the sunshine of Egyptian favor, then sinks trampled into the dust beneath the iron heel of a cruel bondage—lifts its head once more above the refluent waves of the avenging Red Sea—hides from sight in the solitudes of the wilderness—emerges at last from its forty years' wandering in the desert, and conquers for itself, after a hundred

wars, a broad kingdom and a stately metropolis in the land of promise.

Young Rome, yet in its cradle, matched its infant strength against the warlike herdsmen that environed its simple fortresses—then met the onset of remoter kings and tribes—Sabines and Portians—bent to the earth and rose again beneath the rushing of the Gallie tides pouring down from the gates of the north—each encounter a struggle of life and death—grappled in long and doubtful strife with her great rival, Tyrian Carthage—challenged nation after nation to mortal combat, staking her very existence on each throw for fortune's favor, and so crowned herself at last on her seven-pillared throne—queen of the conquered world.

England had her four centuries of fluctuating warfare with the Legionaries of Rome—wrestled with the mighty hordes of the Caledonian wilds, whom she repelled by the help of her Saxon allies, received in turn her helpers as controlling elements of her national life—fainted under the pressure of the vast war-fleets of the Danes—then hurled them back from her shores, as her white cliffs the waves that ever return only to be baffled and broken—met and reeled before the shock of Norman invasion, and again enriched her veins with foreign blood, and so struggled onward through revolutions and wars, and regicides and long Parliaments—to the proudest throne among the nations—wearing now that most royal name, “Sovereign of the Seas.”

The same history of successive struggles—the same eventful annals of disasters and then more signal victories following in rapid alternation, has checkered the life-story of every nation that has risen from weakness to power in all the book of time, confessing, as we have said, in the uniformity of the event, the universal law of national growth.

Our own nation is no exception to this law of centuries, though the young stripling speedily disengaged himself of the swaddling bands of his babyhood—was early weaned, forsaking mother's milk for strong meat—despised creeping—

shook off all equivocal drapery—put on the distinctive costume of his sex, and standing erect on his own feet, in early and ambitious youth, bent to the race, and stretched his Titan limbs on the long course of time, for the foremost place of earthly greatness.

We hope not to be vain-glorious in reciting any of our histories, or working out our horoscope for the future. We have had our portrait sketched so often by foreign artists that came over on purpose, that we ought, by this time, seeing ourselves as others see us, to have learned humility; and there will be enough in our field of thought this day to make us serious and to keep down pride.

Somebody has called us—perhaps we did it ourselves; if so, it is a name of our own invention, and we have a right to it; if not, we have accepted it, and so it is ours—the **YOUNG GIANT OF THE WEST.**

He hasn't many of the graces of the exquisite—this young giant—so the foreign artists have drawn him. The shirt-frill and the patent leather and the patent airs of the French dandy, he doesn't much affect. His clothes are thought not to set well, to be a little awkwardly made and awkwardly worn. But he gets up early in the morning and dresses in haste. He doesn't spend much time before the glass. He runs his fingers through his hair instead of a comb—his only anxiety being to keep it out of his eyes—and neglects the pomatum entirely. In the portrait his shoes are broad and thick soled, but he stands firm in them, and when he swings them they have momentum. His hands are large, but there's a gripe in them. His hat brim is narrow, but it lets the light of heaven on his face. His shirt collar is high and stiff, but it keeps him looking straight ahead after his destiny. His coat is short-waisted, he doesn't run to waste (waist) in broadcloth. The piece of apparel that clothes his nether limbs stops a little too soon in its downward reach, *but he is growing so fast.*

In short, there may be found many a more polished look-

ing gentleman—fitter for ladies' presence ; but there are apparent in him such bone and muscle—such wiry chords about the loose-strung joints—such a long-armed and deep-chested outfit for the wrestling of earth's potentates, that the sight of him doesn't much encourage these jealous ones to try a fall. They may make game of him—and that's just what they find him—**GAME**.

But he wasn't always a giant. He had his own cradling. It was a rude nursery in which he learned to walk—it was a rough discipline that shook him free from his leading-strings.

Scarce two generations of men—and many an individual lifetime still wearing greenly on in the midst of us—span the entire length of our national existence—an added century and a half will go back to our forefathers' first coming—and within these brief periods the germ has become the oak, the fresh-born foster-child of Liberty has become the youthful giant.

The first struggle of American life was against the untamed wildness of Nature. When the Hebrew tribes emerged from the wilderness and set foot in the promised land, they found it, in the expressive phrase of Scripture, a land flowing with milk and honey. The art of human tillage, the labors of human industry had preceded them. It was built up with walled towns and stately cities. Its hills were green with the olive—its cliffs purple with the vine. All they had to do was to enter in and take possession. But our land of promise was the wilderness still. As the keel of the Atlantic voyager approaches now these shores, he gazes upon broad-armed harbors, inviting him into their peaceful waters as the weary sea-bird to its nest, beacon towers, flaming red warning in the darkness or ringing their chimes through the fog—great cities pushing their adventurous granite, munitions of wealth and trade, far out against the besieging waves—forest-girded with the masts of a world-wide commerce—green heights around adorned with

fair villas—smiling valleys retreating back among the hills, continuous gardens—sun-lighted streams bearing down to ocean ports the flow of inland wealth—little brooks white from the vexing water wheels—the smoke of tall chimneys, beneath whose shadows toils the dusky artificer—the lifted spires of Christian temples—all heralding to that voyager a land of peace and plenty, and giving sign of generous and hospitable welcome. How different this picture from that which frowned before the resolute eyes that first measured the New England coast! Hills robed in forest terrors sloped backward from the water's margin—up the silent valleys there were no tracks save those of savage beasts or savage men—over what hidden perils the harbor tides ebbed and flowed they had yet to learn—whither the valley streams led, in their upward course to their fountains, none could tell them—the future harvest plains grew the oak harvests of slow centuries. No houses were built for them—matron and maiden, age and infancy, must shelter themselves in tents or beneath evergreen boughs, from winter's rigors. Nature, in her sternest panoply, seemed thus to defy our fathers to the struggle. Sheathed in glittering snows, like a virgin warrior in mail, she seemed to expect by her very aspect, to decide the contest. She gathered up the awe of her grand mysterious solitudes, to lay upon their spirits. She blew upon them with the chill of her December winds, and sought to pierce their heart with her spear of ice.

But they were no faint-hearted champions that had come over to measure their prowess with her savage wildness. The land was to be possessed. Therefore it was to be explored, subdued, and made to pay tribute. Upon it were to rise cities and villages, and roll the yellow harvest seas. They had strong arms and stout hearts, and the conflict was joined. The first strokes fell—they rang through the woodland depths, and their echoes swept over the sullen waves. The foremost forest ranks bowed to the invasion. Again the axe advanced, and again the serried lines of resistance gave

way. Still was the onset strengthened by new forces, and still the woodland veterans, with all their plumed honors, went down before them. And so the battle-front has rolled on, and so the sturdy giants of the forest and the wild have retreated before it. It has been a continuous conflict, and the end is not yet—but victory has always declared for the invader. The axe—the fire—the plough—the spade—those weapons of assault, cannot be withstood. The noise of the sylvan war is now quite remote. It has rolled backward on the Alleghanies—it has swept northward and eastward into the fastnesses of our mountain ranges and the old woods of Maine—it has rushed across the prairies and left them broad oceans of rolling harvest wealth—faint and far we hear the sturdy strokes, that tell where the van marches, coming back to our ears from the distant valley slopes that rise from the Father of waters—toward the heights that look down upon Pacific Seas. In the track of this bloodless conquest, shoots the green blade of the corn, rise the walls of cheerful and busy hamlets, growing soon to emulous cities, where wealth builds and taste and refinement adorn—and bloom and smile every where the gardens of graceful and happy homes.

As fast as new territories are opened to these restless pioneer feet their ranks are again in motion, and the struggle again renewed, and fresh victories won. The conquering columns are pouring now into those vast regions, whose names are spoken sadly among us as trophies of the triumphant encroachments of the Slave Despotism on our soil. But we do not fear. These axe-armed cohorts of freemen from the East and North and West, carrying fire and smoke before them—symbols not of destruction, but of civilization—of the hearthstones of domestic life, and the glowing furnaces of the arts—forerunners of harvests and orchards—and the manifold comforts of a free and established population, are silently and swiftly taking possession of the disputed realm in the name of humanity and liberty.

Such has been and is the first struggle of American life

and history,—the infant Hercules matching himself in his cradle with the earth-born forces of savage nature! It is not yet consummated—but the whole prestige of the past is with the toiling and adventurous arms that are making this once waste and howling wilderness to blossom as the rose. We believe we may take this opening chapter as an augury for all the history, for other struggles yet to be chronicled, for those unwritten leaves sealed up for us yet, against the opening of which so many begin to tremble.

II. Beginning soon after this struggle, and keeping pace with it for many a tragic year of our story, came *our struggle with savage men—the second struggle of American history*, in which the infancy of the young giant may be said to have cut its teeth. The vast deserts of the North American Continent, unlike the densely peopled shores of South America, which the Spaniards deluged in blood, had really and properly no personal or national proprietors. Over them there roamed the scattered tribes of the aboriginal savages, whose only occupancy of the soil was the privilege of coursing its forest ranges, in the hunt and on the war-path, and tilling their patches of Indian corn. They were for the most part restless nomads, building and deserting again, as the forest game abounded or failed them, their temporary villages of huts, and leaving behind them for whatsoever successor, the soil they had traversed and wrought for a season, but never truly appropriated. On the Plymouth coast, the hand of Providence itself had prepared room for the New England Fathers. A wasting mortality, the ravages of some unknown pestilence, had swept this rude but sacred portal of the continent free for the entrance of the Pilgrims. Doubtless there have been, in the progress and triumph of a European civilization on this continent, many acts of injustice and cruelty committed by white men upon their red brethren of the forest. But our own early history was not so stained. The memorable treaty, formed by *our* forefathers with the great

sachem of the Wampanoags, the peace-loving Massasoit, continued inviolate for fifty years. But at last here also, the jealous fears of the red man, the passions of ambitious chiefs, and, with not a few leading spirits, the instinct of self-preservation kindled the flames of a fierce and exterminating warfare. Its storms broke upon the infant settlements just struggling into life amid vicissitudes of famine and sickness, and thenceforth it seemed that the hatchet was never more to be buried, save with the arm that wielded it. That period has receded among our antiquities as a people; but the scenes it recalls are the most thrilling and terrible in the annals of nations.

Here, too, a sovereign Providence was working to insure to the chosen people, the land kept in reserve for their coming, through silent centuries. Not for the barbarian was this noble continent heaved up from the retiring waters. No race of wild hunters, with a navy of bark canoes, were to evoke the destiny of such a magnificent world. This sweep of ocean coast, deep-serrated with ports and harbors—prophetic of a thousand keels of commerce—these broad inland seas and long reaches of navigable rivers, opening the whole vast interior to the white-winged messengers of trade—the chambered mineral wealth, pushing its dark galleries beneath all the hills—that basin of the central valley, the most splendid theatre for the marvels of human industry on God's earth—these were not, in the designs of Providence, the heritage of savage tribes, whose only quest, as they tracked this superb domain with wood-paths, was the wild deer and the thundering troops of the buffalo. So the victory was given again to the European, and the red man has melted away before the long rolling wave of civilization. We hear still from our far frontiers, the crack of his rifle and the whoop of his charge, as he rallies here and there on his sullen retreat. But the strife is nearly spent. Let us hope that at least and at last, a peaceful evening may close the historic day of a doomed and dying race.

III. *The third struggle* of American life is that whose memories cluster thickest and greenest around us this day. We may call it the effort of the boy-giant to stand upon his feet, and go alone. The bitterness of this strife, was not in the mating of peaceful settlers, untaught in arms, against the trained armies of European battle-fields, not the poverty of the colonists in the resources and munitions of war as measured with the first power of the civilized world ; not that wretched destitution under which our heroic armies trailed their bare-footed and bleeding marches across wintry snows, and over flinty roads—not the slaughter that crimsoned yonder height, whose gray shaft catches and keeps the first and last beams of coming and parting day—nor the arming of neighbor against neighbor, blending the horrors of foreign and civil war—nor the waste of noble life in all the length of the conflict. It was rather in the distressful and outraged sentiments of the heart. It was in the sad necessities that arrayed the Spirit of Liberty against the Spirit of Loyalty—that forced our Fathers, in violence to all their filial love and reverence for the mother-land—into so unnatural a strife. In those days there was no other word for *home*, but England. Stronger than the recollection of all early wrongs, of spiritual oppression and persecution, was this sacred tie that bound them to the place of their birth. England's pleasant soil, England's renown, England's history, were theirs. There rested their ancestral dust. There dwelt still, kinsman and friend. This was the deepest pain—the sorest travail of all the contest, to arm the hand against the tender loyalty of the heart. There was no instinct of treason with those defenders of sacred rights. They were no rebels to just authority, usurping crowns, and clutching sceptres in the lust of power. They were earnest freemen seeking at first, and for long, redress, not revolution. And when the conviction gathered upon them, that there was no peace or security for them or the hallowed prerogatives they stood for, but in Independence—their first, saddest and

yet noblest victory was over themselves. And keeping down their own insurgent hearts with the iron nerve of their great purpose, as great in this inward struggle as in its prophetic outlook over the future, they lifted the flag of their solemn and daring venture, and bore it on to triumph. And as we sit beneath its folds this day, the thunders of a jubilant nation rocking the continent around us, we have to remember not more the dauntless valor of our sires of the Revolution, than that suffering self-conquest, after which no other field was terrible, no other victory memorable. But we must not linger even here. This struggle and its issue only prepared the way for the next.

IV. The struggle of divers and clashing elements to frame themselves into forms of Civil Government. Our giant—now a stripling in the impetuous days of youth, wrestling with his own temper and passions for the sceptre of self-control. This is a history less often recited. Its manifold and imminent hazards are not popularly known, or if known, not remembered. Each school-boy can tell us of Lexington and Concord, of Trenton and Monmouth, of Princeton and Guilford, and Yorktown ; but the fields where mind struggled with mind—the scenes in which the builders wrought together to lift the stately structure of our free Institutions, toiling like the Jews in the time of Nehemiah, when “every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other held a weapon”—these are settling into oblivion. The names of those that drew the sword and shouted battle-cries, are handed down in song and story ; and they who wielded the pen and lifted the voice of patriot oratory in that later and more masterful strife, are left almost unlaureled. But it is scarcely possible for us, in this crowded hour, and under the pressure of what remains to be said of a more present interest, to give even a single page from those stirring records.

The generation that stood together on these shores in the

solemn pause that succeeded the revolutionary struggle, and looking one another in the face, asked how shall we be governed, or rather how shall we govern ourselves, were of varied and heterogeneous elements. They had come from the fixed and formal methods of social and political life in the Old World—each with a physiognomy of his own, sharply cut. They had come each with his own purpose and aim. Some of them had been restless and discontented spirits at home, and flocked hither from love of change or ambition of fresh intrigues. Some were seekers for mines of gold. Some were possessed of lofty conceptions of a new and fairer order of social institutions, than any the world had seen ; and hoped to realize in the free distant wilderness, their pure ideals. And others, again, brought only the sturdy outfit of the peasant-laborer, and a scheme of life whose widest horizon was limited to the improvement of their physical comforts. There were men of Patrician rank, also, who were deep-dyed in aristocratic predilections, and hoped to mark out of the unclaimed riches of the new continent, more magnificent manors than had ever graced the family name. All these, by their common experience of dangers, their united efforts for deliverance, and the common necessities of the new, fresh life that had the same law of personal effort for all—brought into a condition of social equality, were to be consolidated into a government whose equal pressure should rest on all alike—whose beneficent care conserve without partiality the interests of all. The earliest confederacy, created by the exigencies of the war, and equal to those exigencies alone, calmly surveying itself when the war was ended, clearly perceiving its inadequacy to the new career on which the nation was launched, and ingenuous in its confession, nobly and wisely threw back the reins upon the neck of the people. The process of reconstructing a Federal Government on a basis that should be permanent, was most difficult and delicate. Fortunately it was committed to the hands of men as able, faithful and pure as any in our history.

James Madison had a seat in that Convention ; Alexander Hamilton was there,—and with them, the highest and most beloved name in the land—Washington. With such master builders, the majestic fabric of the Constitution rose. It was founded on the principle of the sovereignty of the people—a principle not held abstractly and sentimentally, but boldly applied to all departments of State—all the functions of Government. Its grand and nearest corollary, the intervention of the people in public affairs, the Constitution recognized and established as the supreme law of the land. So was there constructed a central and confederate Government, whose administration, on the contrary, was general and universal. Of course, there must needs be in any such centralization, a seeming infringement upon the Independence of the States—a seeming curtailment of popular rights—an apparent tendency to aristocratic, in distinction from democratic forms of national life. It was impossible, but that there should thus be excited jealousy of the federal power. In a country where every man boasted himself his own master, every village enacted its own local ordinances, each several State clung to its own absolute sovereignty in all its internal affairs, it was not without an effort that the popular mind could be brought to acknowledge a distant centralized supremacy, though the creature of itself. There was a necessity of Union, but a dread of it—a suspicion of it—a war of popular feeling against it. There were boding prophecies as to the ultimate limits of this delegated authority, whereto it might grow—what colossal shadows it might fling over the land. Intriguing politicians were not wanting to those days, who were ready for the price of personal aggrandizement, to inflame the popular discontent, and to stigmatize every Federalist as an enemy to the liberties of the people. The strongest powers, the most prodigious efforts, the purest patriotism of the great leaders of the national fortunes, were demanded, to root the new government in the affections and confidence of the people. Happ-

pily these influences, allied to the personal popularity of the idolized and immortal Father of his Country, were potent enough to meet the crisis and control the issue; and the Federal Government became a fact and a life. The struggle passed by—the storm disappeared from the sky—and though its low mutterings were still heard for a time, the serenity of the Heavens was not again seriously disturbed. For nearly seventy years that contest has been over. No government on earth is more stable. “Treason is a forgotten crime.” The fountains of popular contentment have never been broken up. The yoke sits easy on every neck. Neither individuals nor classes have chafed beneath its pressure. Peace, “with her olives crowned,” sits smiling on all our hills. Around the National Capitol there watch no guards, save the warm encircling hearts of our free and happy millions. For all purposes of national action, the American people is a consolidated unit, respected and honored among the powers of earth. In all matters of private and social concern, the will of the people is its own immediate and almost unrestricted law.

V. But there is yet another struggle upon us, all whose history is sadder, all whose portents are darker, and out of which there has dawned hitherto no day of deliverance. We are indeed now in the very throe and travail of it. It is the gangrene on the limbs of the giant, climbing with dark mortal omens toward the seat of life. It has trailed its humbling and tragic story, its pathway of shame, through all these years of our growing greatness. It has dimmed before the gaze of mankind our star of liberty and promise. It has sullied all our just renown. It has crippled our Christianity—it has intensely tried our patriotism—it has denied the principles for which we have done and suffered most. At times it has seemed to expire, and men would gather jubilant and gratulant to inurn its ashes. And then some breath of the never quiet atmosphere of contro-

versy would blow its embers again to fiercer flames. It has had its campaigns, and then its hollow truces, broken by the shocks of deadlier conflict.

The struggle antedates the day we are celebrating. Its earliest scenes are back in the old colonial times. Our Fathers, then acting in concert, afflicted with a common conscience of the evil, plead against it with the distant royalty to which they held allegiance. They declared in that memorable address to their king, that in their conviction it was impossible "for men,"—these are their words—"impossible for men who exercise their reason, to believe that the divine Author of our existence intended a part of the human race to hold an absolute property in others." And in a mournful and touching sentence they add—"We cannot endure the infamy and guilt of resigning succeeding generations to the wretchedness that inevitably awaits them, if we entail hereditary bondage upon them."

But their plea for royal interposition was haughtily and even arrogantly rejected. And the malign institution thus fostered by English protection, gathered to itself fresh vitality.

The next crisis of the struggle was on the floor of the old National Congress—at the very threshold of our national existence, in the memorable year of 1787. The original Atlantic States, bounded eastwardly by the Ocean shore, and on the north and south by fixed and declared lines of latitude, extended westwardly through the vast hidden interior to the banks of the Mississippi. The great and powerful State of Virginia setting the example and taking the lead, and the other States whose proprietorship ran parallel with its own, through the breadth of the western wilderness, following its pattern of munificence, the whole unmeasured and unknown Northwest, beyond the waters of the Ohio, was ceded to the United States represented by the Continental Congress. That Congress accepted the perilous trust. Here was territory—to be governed—to be legislated for—

out of which by-and-by, new States with institutions, manners and laws of their own, were to come knocking at the door of the Union. Two kinds of labor were in vogue, and in rivalry, throughout the existing confederacy—free labor and slave labor. Which should succeed to this magnificent heritage? And the conflict was joined; for three years it rocked the floor of that Congress, and shook the ill-compacted elements of the confederacy almost to dissolution. It was raging fiercely when the Convention sat to frame the Federal Constitution. Suddenly there was a hush. Out of the storm was born a calm. The great Pacifier, that which said to the tempest, "*Peace, be still*"—was the famed "Ordinance of '87." By this, the whole disputed territory was forever consecrated to freedom. The price of this victory for humanity and right, was the obligation imposed upon the new States, that should some day arise out of that territory, to permit the reclamation of fugitives from bondage. But how confidently it was hoped, that when that day should arrive, not a slave should walk our soil, either in labor or in flight, and how entirely this expectation was acquiesced in by the most strenuous supporters of the institution, all the voices of that time unite to witness. So that when the Convention whose wheels of progress had been blocked by the same barrier against which the Congress had halted, and availing itself of the same method of union and harmony, incorporated in the rising Constitution the same formal, but as it seemed almost idle concession, and added to that in marked inconsistency with the idea and legal definition of slavery, a basis of representation for persons held in bondage—it would not consent that that immortal instrument should be defiled by the name of slave, or by any language that should describe and define a system of human chattelization. That august, fundamental law was framed (we claim it before Heaven) for a race of freemen—to be the palladium of free institutions; and not to carry into the histories of free times, any memorial or relic of the age of barbarism. To make sure of this

near and happy future—to set up a visible bound beyond which slavery should not pass—it was farther ordained that at the end of twenty years, Congress might prohibit the importation of slaves. Thus was the case of slavery, by a process of legislation that carried the consent of all minds, made hopeless. It was forever shut out of all the territory over which floated the national flag. It was taxed by Congress to bear the common burdens of the Government. It was dishonored by the Constitution that refused in the pride of its purity, and the consciousness of its own enduring career, to pollute its lips by one syllable that should recognize its existence, and perpetuate its memory. The precedent was established, that no national sanction should ever accredit its claims to sufferance and succor. There was nowhere within the limits of the confederacy, an inch of new soil conceded to it, for growth and expansion. Just before it was a fixed and absolute line of time, which no subsidies for its failing strength could cross. It was hemmed around with this inexorable cordon of law, and shut up within its own domain to suffocate and die. The friends of humanity rejoiced—those involved in the system were not dissatisfied; the patriot was full of courage and hope, and all looked on together to see in its time the coming and passing of the mortal pang. So lingered and waited the issue. But other elements were to enter into the strife, and shape its coming developments.

Early in the present century, the immense tract of country lying west of the Mississippi, and extending to the British possessions on the north, and westward without limit, known by its French designation of Louisiana, was ceded by France to the United States, for the sum of fifteen millions of dollars. In some parts of this territory, slavery speedily gained a foothold, under the provisions of our treaty with France. The State of Louisiana was admitted into the Union in 1812, without any restriction as to slavery, the system having already taken possession of her soil, and

shaped the forms of her social life. Six years later, Missouri sought to join herself to the sisterhood of sovereign States. "Yes," said the representatives of freedom, "if you will come in undefiled by that foul stain of bondage." "She shall come in without that restriction," said the representatives of slavedom. And again, and with all the old fierceness, the battle raged. For two years the smoke of the conflict hung over the land, and all hearts beat tumultuously with its hopes and its fears. At last the battle-clouds lifted, and the world looked to see on which standard victory had perched. The two hosts were beheld mingling together in friendly interchanges around a double-faced monument, on the one side or the other of which each read the inscription of its own victory. Missouri was admitted with its slaves. But the entire remainder of the debateable land lying north of a certain parallel of latitude, with all its wealth of future States, was again by solemn treaty and compact forever set apart and dedicated to freedom. The temple of Janus was closed again. The sea went down. Agitation was laid to rest. The country had not yet given its full sanction to slavery. It tolerated it where it had made itself at home. It recognized the rights of slave property, where such rights, under local laws or usages, had already accrued; but it still dishonored the system by its interdicts. It forbade it to set its blighting hoof where yet it had not trodden. It held before the Commonwealths, then scarce in embryo, that were yet to be in those broad ranges it guarded, the aegis of the national protection, and so proclaimed slavery a foe to human progress, and to the strength and wealth of States. But for that sacred covenant, Missouri could never have entered beneath the portal of the Union. But for the toleration, not sanction, accorded to her local institutions, both she and her sponsors would perhaps have withdrawn by open and positive rupture from the nationality of the States. We may wish our Fathers had met the naked issue there. We may think the sacrifice they yielded for the sake of family peace, to

avert the horrors of threatened civil strife—too great and precious a sacrifice, for either the prize or the peril. But in their view, though the act was a treason against the holiest principles of our free institutions, and the noblest struggles of our history, though it was a step backward against the hope, and faith, and purpose of the Forefathers, there was still in it a sort of consistency that to them made out its defence. The basis on which the States were confederated, was that local institutions should remain, that the Federal Government, in its legislation and in its administration, should not interfere with the internal affairs of the States, in aught beyond what its own general purposes made imperative. The new applicant for the federal alliance was already under the local law of slavery, and our Fathers, feeling themselves to be without power or authority to remove the evil where it already existed, without their responsibility, gave hesitating and reluctant consent to this new comer, with the plague in her bosom, to enter the privileged household of the Union; at the same time relieving and comforting their hearts, by asserting in a most solemn ordinance for all the rest of that broad territory, thenceforth and forever, an inviolable law of freedom. This is that sacred parchment, laid up in the national archives, and venerable beyond the tabernacle relics to the old Hebrew, upon which the slave power has just now laid its sacrilegious hand, ruthlessly torn it asunder, and scattered its fragments to the four winds. But ere this last historic issue, so foully lost to liberty was joined, there was yet another intervening, that helped to swell and accelerate the fatal drift of the national life toward the degeneracy of the times upon which we are fallen. Upon this scene of the long continued and ever renewed struggle, it is not necessary to dwell. The confused and strange elements of that series of acts, bearing date at the high noon of this latest century of light and progress, and marking, we may justly fear, the hour when the sun of our national glory passed its meridian—contended for by a statesmanship and

oratory peerless in our annals, and which had been, up to that sad crisis, the clearest utterance of our northern spirit and life, were bundled and bound together, and labelled, by eminence, "THE COMPROMISE MEASURES—THE FINALITY OF THE SLAVERY AGITATION." They gave us one free State, on the golden shore of the Pacific; they outlawed the slave mart from beneath the shadow of the capitol; but they opened two extensive territories to the blighting foot of the great curse to tread at will. They breathed the breath of life into the drowsy, effete old ordinance of the reclamation of fugitives—declared in new and most offensive terms, our northern homes, henceforth a hunting ground for flying bondsmen, over which whether the scent lay fresh or cold, the blood hounds might course their prey—trampled on the inalienable right of trial by jury—offered a bounty for each fettered and doomed victim, and cast more galling shackles upon all our instincts of humanity.

And this was to be the end of strife. This was the grave of dissension. This finality was to beat our swords into ploughshares, our spears into pruning hooks—and furl all banners of battle. Henceforth we were to dwell together as brothers, under the spreading olive of peace.

And then like a thunderbolt from a clear sky was launched this double-dyed perfidy of the repeal of the Missouri Compromise. The encircling and protecting league that guarded that vast central West, sloping up toward the base of the Rocky Mountains, shriveled beneath that falling bolt. The sacred barrier all hands had joined to raise, before which all voices had united to say to the dark, on-coming tide of slavery,—“Thus far, but no farther; here shall thy proud waves be stayed”—went down at the springing of that sudden mine. And forward again the long-baffled surges leapt with flashing feet. And there was no sharp and narrow crisis upon us—no abyss of national ruin, yawning before us, from which this dreadful alternative was the only deliverance. In the very wantonness and bravado of reck-

less, faithless power, this new encroachment of slavery shook its insults in the calm face of the North.

Here then at last is the beginning of the end—here the elements of the protracted strife, so long fettered in embarrassing combinations, tied up in complicated alliances—yoked and bound in covenants and pledges, separate themselves and stand fronting one another for the death-grapple. Let the grapple come. We bare our breasts for it. The issue is clear at length. It is not Federal against State rights now; it is not higher law against lower; it is not principle against compromise;—it is liberty versus slavery. Slavery has drawn the sword and cast away the scabbard. Slavery, forsaking all her shifts and policies, proclaims war to the hilt. She asks no longer partitions and divisions. She reaches forth for the whole. She says there shall be no interdict out against her. She will be free to go where she will with her own, the Union over. It shall be no longer, “Freedom national and Slavery sectional;” nor yet Freedom sectional and Slavery sectional; nor yet again, Freedom sectional and Slavery national, but Slavery universal. Any man who cannot see that this is the aim, I do not say of the South, but of the men who have assumed the leading of her destinies, is blind to the plainest signs of the times.

The “calm face of the North” has been quite patient under the controversy—it may have worn an aspect of too much forbearance; it has sometimes gathered to frowns and spoken stern words, but the look of calmness, the words of peace, have been its prevailing aspect and dialect. That aspect changes now. The calmness is there, but very resolute. The eye is kindling with final purpose. The lips are compressed with iron will. The determinate battle is offered us; we are ready—readier now than a few weeks ago.

There was a little local experiment tried on us of the old Bay State—a sort of appendix to the Nebraska Kansas Bill, to test the mercury hereabout. A fellow man, once a chattel, but by the law of nature and the law of God free, and

dwelling among us here in his freedom,—by the help of a trick and a lie, was seized, in our own streets, guarded within chains and granite walls and armed men—tried under the special forms of law for such case made and provided—adjudged to bondage, delivered up, carried off. It was a sad experiment, and something perilous—not encouraging to another like it. Our pulses were not quiet in those days. They beat high and strong—with some rash spirits they were quite uncontrollable. It was not a pleasant sight to look upon our own court of justice converted into a slave prison, fenced off from our approaches by linked steel—and garrisoned as by alien and hostile troops. It was not pleasant for our peaceable and law-abiding citizens—bankers, merchants, artisans, operatives, to find their own places of business barricaded against them—to be crowded and shouldered, and trodden on by our own citizen soldiery, and the hirelings of a remote despotism enforcing its cruel edicts at our doors. It was not pleasant to know that any increased commotion, however stirred, might bring the hail of iron bullets rattling against our windows, and the charge of horsemen trampling down our kinsmen and neighbors. Least of all was it pleasant to reflect that all this was to be endured, as a taunt from Slavery—a tribute to its strengthened sceptre—the cost of smiting with rude hands, here where her cradle was, the matron form of liberty.

By a singular Providence, it fell on the week when Christian churches and Christian ministers were gathered here to celebrate the triumphs of our gospel of peace and good will at home and abroad, that this repulsive and audacious exhibition of injustice and inhumanity confronted their jubilee of light and love; and the strong-chorded beat of the heart of this metropolis was thus sent out in living arteries through the New England Christendom.

Once more, then, the federal law, in its current interpretation—the law that conserves Slavery—that gives back to its irresponsible will every adventurous fugitive dragging its

broken links northward—has triumphed. Anthony Burns is a man no more, but a chattel again. But it may be found that that triumph was too dearly purchased—that that stretch of our endurance unto agony, is the last stage where endurance has its final limit—that this perilous play upon our tortured sensibilities, this determined crushing of our deepest and holiest convictions, may be tried once too often. It may be found that this struggle of our whole national lifetime has worn on to its ultimate phase—that these recent events, illustrating the tendencies of years, and fulfilling the prophecies of all prescient minds, have made the issue now close and inevitable.

I think we are ready, with great solemnity, each to take upon his lips words out of the Sacred Book. “My heart is fixed; oh God, my heart is fixed.”

The day of compromises is past. That broken public faith has shattered all compromises. Men will trust in them, consent to them no more. And this, not we fear because of an increasing tenderness in the public conscience, but because considered as pledges binding to its contracts the perfidious slave power, they are seen to be powerless as ropes of sand. And the men who have strained their conscience to the very utmost tension, and silenced all the protests of their nature, for the sake of peace and in loyalty to the Union—are those whose wounds are deepest. They have gone farthest in concessions to the South—in the spirit of forbearance and the hope of harmony, and this is their reward. Like the Alpine eagle slain by an arrow feathered from its own pinion, they have been pierced through their own generous but mistaken policy. There will be no more compromises!

There will be henceforth a united front for Liberty. We of the North are supplied by this latest outrage with that which has been so long the chief element of strength with the South. A pole-star of hope and effort, a one idea that shall crystallize about it as a central law all political movement and action.

There will be, let us hope, a disruption of all old party ties. The gathering cries of old political strifes—the battle-shout of clansmen following some idolized leader—let them die out. Let the very name of party be sunk in this sacred league of freemen. Partisan issues may well wait awhile till this grander, more vital problem of our public life has found its solution.

This new array will not necessarily be sectional. We will not have the banners read, "*The North against the South.*" Good men and true from every portion of our land, will be found banded together in this holy warfare. The device on this new oriflamme shall be our own soaring eagle bearing in his talons broken fetters, and the inscription, "*Freedom against Despotism.*"

It is a memorable thing that this new step of progress is only after the flight of three-fourths of a century, a return to the spirit of the fathers. Alas, that an onward career of prosperity like ours, should have been as swiftly and surely a backward career in the morals of this great debate. "*Slavery will soon die,*" they thought and said; and the old thirteen States twined their arms together like a band of virgin sisters. "*Slavery will soon die,*" and they framed the Constitution to meet that present exigency, and to ignore forever its memory. "*Slavery will soon die,*" and they made the importation of slaves piracy on the high seas. Penitently and reverently we must tread our way back to the moral eminences where they stood, and changing that syllable of expectation to one of bold and determined purpose, say, here and now, after so long a time, "*Slavery MUST die.*"

There will come a day of reckoning with politicians. They have had our "honor" in their keeping, and betrayed the trust. They have made for us corrupt bargains, and repudiated them when they pleased. They have truly represented neither North nor South. They have dishonored the South, by branding her with the stigma of covenant-breaking. They have, in the very stress and strain of the

high debate, spoken soft and timid words for us, when their tongues should have sounded indignant thunders. We must deal with politicians—we must create a new race of them, with the northern back-bone bracing them to an upright and fearless manhood. Thank God we hear at last a true tone, where at least one fearless champion keeps the whole snarling litter at bay.

We must yield no more territory to the insatiable spirit of slavery propagandism. Not another particle of freedom's sacred dust, *whatever*, I know what I say, it is a broad word, and has a terrible significance—WHATEVER be the alternative. Into that imperiled West, from which every holy guard for freedom is withdrawn, we must pour the living streams of freemen. Let it flow, our best New England blood to enrich and consecrate that soil—let them go, our sons and daughters carrying thither good destinies with them. The race-course is free to us—yonder vesper star the prize, let us see if Freedom cannot win the race.

We must admit on no pretence another slave State. Are not all old pledges dead and buried? We do put the national imprimatur upon the system, when we add one of those malign stars to the glorious constellation.

We must stand for the repeal of that harsh law that goes trampling through the sacred privacies of our homes, unearthing the hidden, trembling fugitive, and remanding him to chains.

Till that hour strikes, we must lend that barbarous decree no help or countenance. If there be penalties for such recusancy, let them lay their heaviest exactions on our heads. Sooner than join our aid to the savage hunt, to lay the flying bondman by the heels, let the avengers of such law drag us to fetters. Sweeter and brighter than the beauty of day shall be the gloom of dungeons in such a martyrdom—richer poverty under such proscription and confiscation, than wealth and station the price of dishonor.

This is no plea for armed resistance. Violence and blood-

shed win no laurels for principle. Oh, my fellow citizens, let us remember that our true love for humanity, our noble indignation at wrong—our quenchless loyalty to right, are all mixed and sullied with the stains of earthlier passions, when we join to them the clenched hand, the gnashing teeth, and the gleaming blades of popular insurrection.

This may we do, and keep both clean hands and an honest conscience—withdraw, on every hand, each private citizen—each public functionary—each humblest servitor of justice, from the processes of that legal kidnapping, and let them thrive as they may, without us. One such bright example, of laying down office that cannot be administered with honor, is worth for the cause of freedom a hundred orations. We shall serve our cause best, keep its dignity and purity most inviolate, when we suffer the cruel edict to take its way, with such allies as it can buy and yoke to its car, amid our stern and meaning silence. Let our citizen soldiery take to themselves salutary caution. If they are in haste at such crises, when the authority of our own State court, the provisions of our own State laws, the mandates of our own State magistrates, the rights of our own metropolitan proprietorship—are nullified by the Federal power arrayed on the side of inhumanity and unrighteousness,—if they are in haste to flash the sheen of their steel and the glitter of their uniform, before our eyes as the life-guards of oppression, to display their tactics and horsemanship in our public squares, as a terror not only to all free and generous sentiments, but to the administration of our own forms of justice, if they are to be associated with the pressure of the Federal Government upon us, overriding and overawing the course of law in the midst of us—rather than with the conservation of these sacred rights of their fellow citizens: they must not complain if they come to be looked upon henceforth, as the myrmidons of tyranny, rather than the defenders of Liberty.

And if in taking thus our unalterable position, we hear again on every Southern wind, the alarm cry of “DISUNION”

—let the blast blow, till it spend itself. It has been a periodic gale, through the lifetime of two generations. It has swept with it, as every wind does, the light-lying surface dust, and withered leaves, and seemed to darken the hemisphere: but it has not prostrated the oaks or unseated the hills. Let the wind blow—after the storm cometh the calm. And if that idle terror become at last a dread reality—if the price of the Union should still be the bleeding sacrifice of humanity, the fettered body of liberty—if there lie within this broader nationality no redemption for the dishonored name of our free Republican Institutions,—if our sister States of the South choose rather to cut themselves clear from the strong bands of the confederacy, than to yield their unholy demands upon us to fall down and worship their great Moloch,—if they think it practicable and easy to adjust for themselves a separate nationality, with a frontier line of States touching our free North, to shut themselves up trusting to such forces of law, police and arms as they can muster, with that magazine of destruction in the midst of them,—*if they will it so, EVEN SO LET IT BE.* This is n't the *worst*. The *worst* is to drag along with us forever into the world's brightening future, *this body of death*. If it will fall off from us instead of suffering burial, let it go.

But let not that word *disunion* as a threat or a hope, pass *our* lips. It belongs to a Southern vocabulary. For ourselves we will keep, if we can, our cherishing love for the whole country—for a confederacy of States, united, happy, and *free*. Oh, we do not love our country less, that we are unwilling to perpetuate her shame; or in her name to perpetuate the age of iron. We are none the less to-day large-hearted patriots, that we would burnish that blotted line, which spans our portals—“*the great and free Republic*”—so that the far-off nations may read its shining capitals. We turn no parricide's blade against the breast of cherishing motherland, when we seek with the surgeon's kindly art, to cut out that deadly cancer that is eating into her life. We

are not sinning against the spirit and memories of this day, if, while celebrating that original Declaration of Independence, we frame another—*entire national freedom, now and forever, from the despotism of Slavery*, and pledge to it as the fathers did—“our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.”

VI. It was my hope to have found room for a final word, in reference to yet one more struggle, whose omens are beginning to thicken upon our fate—and to meet which we need to rally again within us, the spirit of the forefathers—their severe simplicity, their early Roman virtues. I mean the struggle of our simple republican tastes and habits with the swelling tides of private and public extravagance. I see here, not merely in our growing wealth, the development of our boundless resources of material riches—of productive industry and art—the gathering of broader harvests on the plains of husbandry, and the return of richer argosies from the ventures of commerce—but in the use we make of wealth, in its prodigal expenditure, in the pomp and show of private life, in the enervating spirit of luxury and effeminacy, stealing in upon us, with footfall as silent and as blighting as the plague; a darker cloud low-lying on our country’s horizon, with live lightnings sleeping in it, than even that whose colossal shadows are stretching from our southern sky past the zenith. This is a peril I cannot signalize to-day. And yet let us be warned. So ran the elder Republics their swift, downward race. So may we, if other perils spare us, sink from the very excess of prosperity into a splendid and gilded decay.

It is manifest, then, that we are pressing forward toward eventful and final issues. “*The times that tried men’s souls*,” are not merely historic, but present. The gravest questions of the entire problem of American Destiny wait their solution, we believe, of the men of this generation. The question whether this great experiment shall fail—whether this star on whose trembling ray hangs the world’s last hope for

personal, political and religious freedom, shall go down—whether our career, so omened and so watched, shall prove itself only a stride back into the darkness of kingcraft and priestcraft—whether this banner, baptized in blood, unto man's liberty and God's truth by those who begat us, shall lead the mad career of a conquest, stimulated by no ambition—throbbing to no lust of power, but shackled to the car of slavery, across the Mexican Gulf and the Caribbean Sea, and over the Isthmus and beyond the Equator—whether we have enough of patriotism, conscience and piety to enthrone above all national legislation God's law, as highest and holiest—whether we have moral heroism enough to fight the hydra-headed monster of oppression, and burn the life out of its multiplying crests—whether we have enough of the stern old virtue of the Puritan stock, ancestral in our lineage—to hold ourselves back and our country back, from the luxury and profligacy of great and sudden riches—to these determinate questions let us stand up in solemn and prayerful earnest—trustees for our own and after-times, of such measureless interests, and GOD PROSPER THE RIGHT!

1800-1820-1830

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 011 801 699 3

